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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: FEBRUARY 09, 2009

Summary: Today's newspapers differed in their choice of lead stories. Some major dailies highlighted U.S Ambassador Richard Holbrooke's remarks that "fighting the insurgency in Afghanistan could prove tougher than in Iraq." Whereas, Prime Minister Gilani's statement made while talking to reporters in Multan that "Pakistan enjoys world support and its diplomacy and foreign policy are strong enough to defeat Indian designs of isolating Pakistan" received prominent coverage in other major daily newspapers. Most newspapers highlighted reports that the "authorities clamped a curfew on entire Swat district, as nine more people were killed in the restive valley." All newspapers reported that the "Taliban militants released a videotape showing the beheading of a Polish geologist." The English language daily, "Dawn," reported that the "Government may file appeal against Dr. AQ Khan's release."

Newspapers ran editorials on a host of subjects including the visit of Ambassador Holbrooke, release of Dr. A.Q. Khan, war on terrorism and the U.S. economic meltdown. Commenting on the Ambassador Holbrooke's visit, the center-right national daily, "The Nation," underlined that a "comprehensive strategy to deal with the terrorist phenomenon should involve a clear roadmap of the exit of foreign forces from Afghanistan." The Lahore-based liberal daily, "Daily Times," noted that the "primary target is securing Afghanistan against the Taliban. But it would be folly to think that an American leadership will spend scarce funds during a historic economic crisis to give Pakistan a free ride." The Urdu daily, "Jang," observed that the "sole purpose of the baseless charges and apprehensions of the U.S. and other western circles that the Pakistan's nuclear arms might fall prey to the extremists and terrorists are that they want to give reason for hitting Pakistani nuclear program." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"Afghanistan Tougher Than Iraq: Holbrooke; Pakistan Needs Aid, Sympathy" "Dawn" (02/09)

"The United States warned its allies on Sunday that fighting the insurgency in Afghanistan could prove tougher than in Iraq and appealed, along with Britain, for more troops and equipment. U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke insisted that a new approach was required to turn the strife-torn country around, involving all of Afghanistan's neighbors, particularly Pakistan...."

"Holbrooke Arrives Today For Talks On Terrorism" "The News" (02/09)

"Richard Holbrooke, President Barack Obama's troubleshooter for Pakistan and Afghanistan, will visit Islamabad today (Monday) before going to Kabul and New Delhi to devise a grand strategy to rid the region of Islamist militancy."

"By No Means Can India Isolate Pakistan: Gilani" "The News" (02/09)

"Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani has said that Pakistan enjoys world support and its diplomacy and foreign policy are strong enough to defeat Indian designs of isolating Pakistan. He was talking to media persons in Multan on Sunday."

"Gilani Asks U.S. To Strengthen Capacity Of Pakistan Force" "Dawn" (02/09)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani has called upon the United States to develop a new strategy wherein there is 'more intelligence sharing between the two countries.' 'So when actionable and credible information is shared with us, we would be allowed to hit [targets] ourselves instead of the Americans.' In an interview with Newsweek published on Sunday, Mr. Gilani appealed to the world and to the Americans that they should 'strengthen the capacity of our law-enforcement agencies.'"

"Call For Regional Approach To Defeat Terrorists: Qureshi Stresses Battle For Hearts And Minds" "Dawn" (02/09)

"The international community needs to adopt a comprehensive regional approach focusing on 'a generous focus on reconstruction, development and social welfare with participation of all stakeholders' for eradicating terrorism and extremism, says Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi."

"Pakistan Seen Most Urgent Challenge To U.S." "Dawn" (02/09)

"The U.S. Central Command has concluded a study which claims that the most urgent foreign policy challenge facing the Obama administration is Pakistan. The CENTCOM, which is directly responsible for all American military activities in the Afghan-Pakistan region, is expected to submit the report to President Barack Obama in a few days."

"Drone Strike Killed High-Value Targets, U.S. Tells Pakistan" "Dawn" (02/09)

"The United States wants to continue drone strikes inside Pakistan's tribal areas because U.S. military experts believe the strikes have killed a large number of Al Qaeda leaders and local militants and have destroyed their hideouts. A U.S. account of the strikes, conveyed to Pakistan and obtained by 'Dawn,' depicts a picture which is very different from the public perception in Pakistan that the strikes only kill innocent civilians and children."

"Afghan Conflict Inflicts \$35 Billion Loss on Pakistan: FM" "The Statesman" (02/09)

"Foreign Minister Mahmood Qureshi has said that for the last three decades, Pakistan has suffered the gravest fallout of the conflict in Afghanistan, while addressing the 45th Munich Security Conference, Qureshi said Pakistan's economy has suffered direct and indirect losses of more than \$35 Billion."

"Defense Committee To Get Mumbai Report Today" "Dawn" (02/09)

"Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani has said that the report of investigation into the Mumbai terror attacks will be presented to the cabinet's Defence Coordination Committee at a meeting on Monday. The Prime Minister said the government would give its opinion after studying the report."

"Indian Army Chief Terms Surgical Strikes Feasible" "The News" (02/09)

"Indian Army chief General Deepak Kapoor on Sunday said the option of surgical strikes against 'the terror infrastructure' in Pakistan was 'very much feasible' militarily, but whether you wish to take that decision or not is a separate issue, he said when asked by PTI whether such strikes were feasible."

"Internal Hand Involved In Mumbai Attacks" "Daily Times" (02/09)

"Indian Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Singh Modi hinted on Sunday that the Mumbai terror attacks could not have been carried out without internal help - comments that are in sharp contrast with claims by other Indian officials who hold Pakistan solely responsible for the attacks."

"Swat Under Curfew As Nine More Die In Violence" "The News" (02/09)

"As the authorities clamped a curfew on entire Swat district, nine more people, including three militants and a soldier, were killed in shelling and incidents of violence in the restive valley."

"Militants Release Videotape Of Engineer's Beheading" "Dawn" (02/09)

"Taliban militants on Sunday released a videotape showing the beheading of Polish geologist Piotr Stancza and warned other kidnapped foreigners would meet the same fate if their demands were not met.... The video includes a statement by the Taliban, claiming they had other foreign nationals in their custody, including a Chinese, who would be beheaded if the government of Pakistan did not accept their demands."

"10 Militants Among 14 Killed In Bajaur" "The News" (02/09)

"Fourteen people, including 10 militants, were killed and three others sustained injuries when security forces targeted hideouts of militants with gunship helicopters and heavy artillery in the Bajaur Agency on Sunday."

"Pakhtoons Getting Up The Nerve To Fight Taliban" "The News" (02/09)

"The Pakhtun Peace Jirga (PPJ) announced Sunday it would approach the International Court of Justice to seek punishment for 'the enemies of the Pakhtoon people who imposed Taliban on them.' The convener of PPJ and former Provincial Minister, Syed Kamal Shah, told a peace rally in Mardan on Sunday."

"Parking Bays For NATO Supplies Shifted To Punjab" "The News" (02/09)

"Parking bays for transshipment of NATO supplies were shifted to Punjab because of the frequent attacks on container terminals by suspected militants, a source told 'The News.' A number of contractors, a source said, have shifted their terminals to Hassanabdal and Tarnol towns in Punjab while the rest are packing up to move goods in a couple of days."

"UN Appeals For Release Of Its Kidnapped U.S. Official" "The News" (02/09)

"The United Nations on Sunday called for the immediate release of its refugee agency's representative in southwest Pakistan, abducted in an ambush on February 2. 'The United Nations remains deeply concerned over the fate of Solecki, the UN said in a statement.'... The UN is seeking further information on a group called Balochistan Liberation United Front, which claimed through local media it was holding Solecki."

"Govt. May File Appeal Against Dr. Khan's Release" "Dawn" (02/09)

"The government is considering filing an appeal against Islamabad High Court's verdict declaring nuclear scientist Dr. A. Q. Khan a 'free citizen.' Government sources told 'Dawn' on Sunday that the court decision might be challenged because of concerns expressed by the United States and the United Kingdom over the 'release' of Dr. Khan."

"Pakistan 'Will Not Allow' Nuclear Secret Leaks Again" "Business Recorder" (02/09)

"Pakistan will not allow its scientists to leak the secrets of nuclear weapons to other countries, Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi said in Munich on Sunday, two days after his country

released a nuclear scientist who confessed to leaking nuclear secrets."

"Dr. Khan Can't Interfere In N-Policies: Qureshi" "The News" (02/09)

"Minister for Foreign Affairs Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Sunday said Dr. A.Q. Khan has already been relieved of his duties and he is no more in a position to interfere in the country's nuclear-related policies."

"Dr. A. Q. Khan's Release Gets On Western Diplomats' Nerves" "The News" (02/09)

"The western diplomats including the U.S. and some Asian countries are desperately trying to dig out the so-called secrets working in the backdrop of sudden release of Pakistan's nuclear scientist Dr. A.Q. Khan through the superior judiciary.... The West is contemplating to put pressure on Islamabad to go for an appeal in the apex court against the verdict, well-placed diplomatic sources told 'The News' in Islamabad."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Holbrooke's Visit," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/09)

"As U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke lands at Islamabad today, a western diplomatic source has ventured to surmise that he would be delivering a strong message from the Obama administration when he meets the Pakistani leadership.... There can be little doubt about the efficacy of Mr. Holbrooke's prescription for Pakistan's ills.... As for Mr. Holbrooke's reference to 'a new policy for the tribal areas' is concerned, the sooner the Obama administration realizes that recourse to drone attacks is creating more converts to militancy, the better for its cause."

"No Afghan Strategy Without Pakistan," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/09)

"The primary target is securing Afghanistan against the Taliban. But it would be folly to think that an American leadership will spend scarce funds during a historic economic crisis to give Pakistan a free ride. Mr. Biden, while taking a more comprehensive view of the developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan, makes no bones about the purpose of his policy: 'America will do more, but America will ask for more from our partners.'"

"[Iran's] Denial Of Nuclear Cooperation From Pakistan," an editorial note in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (02/09)

"The sole purpose of the baseless charges and apprehensions of the U.S. and other western circles that the Pakistan's nuclear arms might fall prey to the extremists and terrorists are that they want to give good reason for hitting the Pakistani nuclear program. The western forces don't want to see a Muslim country to seek or develop the nuclear technology that is why there fears are linked with the nuclear program of Pakistan, Iran and Syria."

"Hue And Cry Over Release Of Dr. Khan," an editorial note in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (02/09)

"The big powers are raising hue and cry over the release of the Pakistani nuclear scientist Dr. Khan, and they think that his release will accelerate the wave of terrorism. Obviously, who can be a bigger 'terrorist' other than Dr. A.Q. Khan, as he made a poor Muslim country a nuclear-armed state? Someone must ask from these western powers that more than 200 nuclear bombs of Israel aren't a threat to anyone? Or the thousands of nuclear bombs in the arsenals of the U.S., Britain, Germany and Russia are simple showpieces, and no one should be afraid of these 'playthings'?"

"Questions Stemming Out Of Dr. AQ Khan's Release," an editorial in Karachi based left-wing Sindhi Daily "Awami Awaz" (Cir. 70,000) (02/09)

"With the release of Dr. Khan, it would become extremely difficult for the Government of Pakistan to avoid the demand of the western countries to permit the UN nuclear watchdog IAEA grill Dr. Khan on proliferation issue."

"A.Q. Khan, Again," an op-ed by Ejaz Haider in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/09)

"The timing of the court verdict is interesting, come as it did just days before the four-day visit to Pakistan by Richard Holbrooke, President Obama's special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Is there signaling involved here too, in addition to other factors that forced the government's hand in making the deal? If there is, we need to discuss what exactly Islamabad wants to do with the U.S. and whether such a policy has been adequately debated."

"Dealing With Terrorism," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (02/09)

"U.S. Vice President Joe Biden says that the war against terrorism in Afghanistan can't succeed with Pakistan's participation. On the other hand informed Pakistani circles believe that the terrorism in Pakistan was a result and reaction of Pakistan's Afghanistan policy. They say that Pakistan would not have faced suicide attack had it not cooperated with America in the war on terror."

"Encouraging Statement By The U.S. Vice President," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (02/09)

"Talking in Munich, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden has said that no U.S. strategy in Afghanistan can succeed without Pakistan's' help.... U.S. Vice President's statement points towards favorable circumstances for Pakistan. It is said that Biden has a soft spot for Pakistan. Pakistan should also establish cordial relations with the new U.S. administration so that its position in South Asia is strengthened."

"U.S. Is Giving Second Thought To Afghanistan," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/09)

"While the U.S. Vice President urged western countries in Munich to share responsibility in Afghanistan, NATO's Secretary General blasted Europe's reluctance to respond to American calls for more troops in Afghanistan. Lack of any more interest in Afghanistan by major NATO countries was a message that might have forced the Obama Administration to have a new strategy for the area. If and when it happens this will have a positive impact on this side of the Durand Line as well and help stabilize the situation."

"Global And American Interests," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000) (02/09)

"U.S. Vice President Joe Biden's speech at the Security Conference in Munich reflects new approach of the Obama Administration towards Pakistan and Afghanistan. Though this change is not absolutely in the interest of these two countries, it does usher an era where U.S. feels compelling need of Pakistan to be a part of the solution. With a improved and vibrant diplomacy, Pakistan can remind the U.S. that President Bush had pledged to help resolve the Kashmir dispute as a reward of Pakistan's support in the war on terror. Today when U.S. is entangled in Afghanistan, this is the right time to demand for the solution of Kashmir issue."

"Foreign Minister's Protest Over Drone Attacks And Airspace Violation," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (circ.5000) (02/09)

"U.S. drone attacks point to the fact that the NATO troops have failed to control the terrorists in Afghanistan.... As a result of these drone attacks, hundreds of tribal women and children have been killed, despite being innocent.... Pakistan's foreign minister has said in Munich that the real causes for terrorism are unemployment

and unfair division of resources. Ever sane citizen of the world understands that terrorism cannot be eliminated until these issues remain unresolved."

"Foreign Interference In Tribal Areas Must Be Stopped To Restore Peace In Tribal Areas," an editorial note in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (02/09)

"Although the present government initiated some steps to restore peace in the tribal areas, but the external forces changed this part of the world into a war theater to serve their own purpose. The foreign interference is still there, and the drone attacks are not halted so far. The growing law and order situation paved the way of economic downturn in the country. Now it is essential to form a consultative committee in collaboration with all political and religious parties to bring back peace and harmony, and eliminate extremism from the border areas."

"U.S. Arms For Sale," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/09)

"The sale of high-tech U.S. weapons in Peshawar is extremely disturbing to say the least.... It is quite alarming to learn that militant organizations like the Taliban and various others with their own terrorist agendas could easily acquire them posing a serious risk to the security of the country. There are already reports indicating that a number of modern combat vehicles like Humvees are in possession of the Taliban. That these weapons are falling into the hands of militants suggests that there is a whole mafia involved in weapon's acquisition and sale, apart from the looting of NATO convoys."

"Terrorism Returns To Punjab," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/09)

"As the Pakistan army has joined the battle against the terrorists in the Tribal Areas with an increasing number of victim populations giving it their backing, the warlords of Al Qaeda are activating their 'sleeping cells' in the Madarassa network of South Punjab. So we should expect the wave of killings to come up north and strike central Punjab too, including Lahore, in a major way."

"Obama's Fate," an op-ed by Dr. Haider Mehdi in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/09)

"The fact of the matter is that the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan are not the problem. In absolute earnest, they can be the ultimate solution to political impasse in both countries. The real problem is the Americans and their allies' occupation of Afghanistan. End the political-military occupation and the so-called 'terrorism' will cease immediately. But Obama will not be allowed to do so. The primary motive for the 2005 invasion of Afghanistan was not to fight terrorism, but to create a base for the assertion of U.S. influence over the rich resources of former Soviet republics in Central Asia."

"Honeymoon Over," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/09)

"President Obama has enjoyed the briefest of honeymoons after his inauguration on January 20. The mess that the American economy was dragged into by the Bush administration is not going to go away, and the newly minted President has managed to shoot himself in the foot a couple of times already. His appointment of at least two members of his cabinet who appear to be unable to correctly fill in their tax returns and consequently had to vacate the chairs they had only just begun to warm - looks bad. Also not looking too good is the so-called 'stimulus package' that is currently rattling around in Congress.... President Obama may be new but the system he inherits is not, and if anybody thought that the works of Bush and Co. were easily undone then they lived in a fool's paradise."

"U.S. Economic Stimulus," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/09)

"While the Democrats control the executive and the legislature, the spending plan ran into trouble in the Senate where they are two

votes short of the 60 needed to pass a stimulus bill. To fiscal conservatives in the Republican Party, President Obama's stimulus program is reckless and they would rather he focus on their economic panacea: tax cuts. On the other hand, the Democratic Party has many liberals who fervently support bigger government. But since the Democrats can't go it alone in the Senate, they have been forced to make concessions to win over moderate Republicans."

Patterson